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## TRUSTEES OF THE SCHOLARSHIP FUND

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## Theodor Mommsen

(1817-1903)

### In Two Parts—Part II

It has often been said that Mommsen was not a great teacher. If by that is meant that his lectures were not distinguished by any flights of eloquence or flashes of fancy, that he appealed only to the maturer student, then certainly Mommsen can lay no claim to the noble title. If, on the other hand, a limpid clearness of exposition, fruitful suggestiveness, a power to inculcate scientific methods of historical research and the maieutic art to arouse in youthful minds dormant talents and to fire them with an enthusiastic zeal to contribute something of genuine value to the sum of human knowledge, if these be the characteristics of the genuine educator, then Mommsen need not shun comparison with other great scholars who succeeded, as he certainly never did, in crowding their lecture rooms. In these days moreover, when students are prone to select their courses rather with a view to an ultimate examination, than because of the intrinsic value of the lectures offered, the inestimable benefit derived from sitting at the feet of an acknowledged master will perhaps not be so readily appreciated. But if, as a pupil of Mommsen, I may venture to cite my personal experience, I have always felt in listening to his lectures on Latin Epigraphy, for example, as I doubtless should have felt, if I had had the privilege of hearing Shakespeare comment on the drama. It left an indelible impression upon my memory and I cherish it as a delightful possession. This may be considered hero worship, which has come to be regarded as old-fashioned and bad form, but, if so, I am not ashamed of it even now.

The well-known saying of Terence "Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto" applies with singular force and appropriateness to Mommsen. His interests were as manifold as they were extensive. It is but natural that he at an early date should turn his attention to public questions. He was distinctively a man *with* a country, an ideal type of the scholar in politics, a true patriot without a touch of the chauvinist who so often passes for the former. His imagination never failed to kindle at the contemplation of great deeds and though the revolutionary aspiration of 1848 caused him to be deeply saturated with liberal and democratic ideas which he steadfastly adhered to down to the end of his days, he was a loyal supporter of the Prussian dynasty and welcomed with enthusiasm the realization of a unified Germany, according ungrudging and sincere

praise to Bismarck for the part he took in bringing about this consummation. But when the great Chancellor, at a later date, advocated measures which Mommsen regarded as pernicious, he boldly and in scathing language denounced their author.

When Mommsen spoke the entire nation listened and Bismarck, who could ill brook opposition, particularly when coming from such a source, knowing that he would be unable by his usual ruthless methods to crush such a man as Mommsen, finally invoked the aid of the courts to vindicate him from the historian's severe arraignment. In a sensational trial which aroused the attention of the world, the prince of scholars won a glorious triumph over the prince of statesmen, but unlike the defeated chancellor, Mommsen never cherished ill will or resentment against him, being always ready to lend his powerful moral support to Bismarck's policies whenever they seemed to him to deserve it. His political interests were, however, in no way confined to his own country and whether it concerned the anti-German movements in Austria or England's conduct in the Boer war, he publicly gave expression to his convictions, often in passionate language. The Spanish-American war he at first regarded together with the great majority of the people of continental Europe as one of unjustifiable aggression and spoliation, but when the real motives of our action became better known to him and he saw the independence of Cuba established, his feelings underwent a great change. Recent statements in the press recalling this incident have given the impression that Mommsen was hostile to America. As a matter of fact I know from personal conversations with him, that he had the highest admiration for our democratic government, our freedom of thought and speech, the inventive genius and business capacity of our people and above all he marvelled at the magnificent private munificence of men of wealth in endowing institutions of learning, hospitals and great scientific enterprises. He quoted Berkeley's "Westward the course of empire takes its way" with evident approval and, indeed, the phrase now so often heard that the United States is the great land of the future, I have heard from his living lips.

One other incident may also be recalled, for though of very recent date, I have seen no mention of it in the obituary notices which have come under my observation and yet it admirably illustrates one of the most salient characteristics of the man. When in 1902 the government desirous of complimenting a powerful political party appointed a young Catholic of mediocre ability to the chair of history at the University of Strassburg and that too against the unanimous opposition of the Faculty, the aged warrior once again stepped into the arena and in a public letter denounced this action in fiery language, making an eloquent plea for the principle of "voraussetzungslose Forschung", research for its own sake,

unbiased and uninfluenced by creed or unscientific considerations. This indignant protest found a most responsive echo throughout Germany and the Universities hastened to transmit to Mommsen resolutions thanking him for thus voicing the scientific conscience of the nation and vindicating the ideals of true scholarship.

"No genius without passion" Mommsen remarks in his matchless characterization of Caesar. The observation may be applied to himself. He was of the spirit militant, a born fighter for what he thought right and a passionate assailant of wrong. But in his private life he was the gentlest and kindest of men, tolerant of other people's opinions, charitable to their failings. A singular modesty was one of his most conspicuous traits, though this need not surprise us, for this quality is perhaps never dissociated from genuine greatness. He steadfastly refused titular honors and decorations, being content to remain plain Prof. Mommsen. He was fond of the society of bright men and women and was himself a most fascinating conversationalist. He had nothing of the "doctor umbraticus", nothing of the pedant about him, and was withal a most lovable man. He died in the fullness of years, his lifework accomplished, revered for his noble qualities and admired throughout the civilized world for his splendid intellectual gifts. In his numerous works he left to posterity a "monument more durable than bronze", a source of inspiration and profit, so long as consummate learning and solidity of achievement shall be held in honor.

ALFRED GUDEMAN, Cornell University

### Latin Requirements for Harvard and for Yale

Some months ago the writer had occasion to compare the requirements in Latin for admission to Harvard and to Yale. There was found to be a substantial agreement in the amount of work prescribed, but an annoying disparity when the attempt was made to adjust the material to the preliminary and final examinations. A study of the subjoined tables will make the extent of the trouble clear.

#### YALE

##### PRELIMINARY

- (1) Caesar and Nepos at sight.
- (2) Cicero: *In Catilinam* i-iv; *Pro Archia*; *De Imperio Pompei* or an equivalent.

##### FINAL

- (3) Ovid at sight.
- (4) Vergil: 5600-6300 verses.

#### HARVARD

##### PRELIMINARY

- (1) Caesar and Nepos at sight.
- (2) Cicero: *In Catilinam*, i-iv.
- (3) Vergil, or Ovid and Vergil: 2000-3000 verses.

##### FINAL

- (4) Vergil, or Ovid and Vergil, 3000-8000 verses (depending partly on the amount read for preliminaries. *Aeneid* i-vi is prescribed as part of the verse requirement.
- (5) Cicero: Orations additional to those read for preliminaries, making in all 90-120 Teubner pages.

When no attempt is made to divide the material the substantial agreement becomes still more apparent. Thus:

#### YALE

Caesar and Nepos. Translation at sight.  
Cicero: *In Catilinam* i-iv; *Pro Archia*; *De Imperio Pompei* or an equivalent.  
Vergil: *Aeneid* i-vi, and *Bucolics* or *Aeneid* viii, ix.  
Ovid: *Metamorphoses*: Translation at sight.

#### HARVARD

Caesar and Nepos. 90-120 Teubner pages.  
Cicero: *In Catilinam* i-iv; *De Imperio Pompei*; other selected orations; total 90-120 Teubner pages.  
Vergil and Ovid: 6000-10,000 verses, including *Aeneid* i-vi.

For the Harvard preliminaries the candidate *must* have had some poetry. He does not require so much prose as at Yale. This indicates the ideal readjustment, which would be for Yale to accept for preliminaries four Orations of Cicero and two (or three) books of Vergil; postponing the rest of the Cicero, the rest of the Vergil, and the Ovid until the final examination. This programme would coincide practically with the recommendation of the Committee of Twelve of the American Philological Association, and have the double advantage of leaving no year without its prose to influence the Latin Composition, and preventing the monotony consequent upon giving an entire year to prose or poetry alone.

About four years ago the writer sent out a circular letter to a number of leading schools suggesting the desirability of the change just mentioned. The proposition was rather warmly approved, at least ten other prominent schools united with The Hotchkiss School in an offer to prepare for such examinations, and copies of the correspondence were sent to New Haven. The request was granted, the plan was adopted and was working even better than its originator had hoped, when, after three years we were met by the statement that, inasmuch as other schools than Hotchkiss were not presenting candidates under the new system to any great extent, the privilege must be withdrawn. Attempts to avert by prayer and protest this calamity having proved unavailing, the writer would invite his brothers in the craft to examine the situation, in hopes that a condition which necessitates separate instruction for either Yale or Harvard candidates may in some way be bettered.

Nothing has been said about reading Vergil before Cicero, as that affords no help. To offer Ovid as a Yale preliminary would be a partial solution, although it seems unkind to ask the Harvard candidate to attack a sight passage from Vergil without at least some acquaintance with the peculiarities of that author.

Nothing has been said about the different ideals of the two colleges, for a reason which will presently appear. In the first place, the work that a student does in his freshman Latin at Yale cannot differ materially from what he would do if he were at Harvard. At either college he is called upon to read Latin with some show of power and appreciation; and these essentials secured, the rest follows easily. Furthermore, the Yale requirement lays emphasis on the ability to read at sight, and the Harvard examiners have found it wise to prescribe definite amounts of the various Latin authors. Lastly and perhaps brutally, but altogether certainly, no one who has reached his pedagogical majority can be seriously disposed to believe that much significance